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Under the Canopy: Ritual Process and Spiritual Resilience in South Africa

By Linda Elaine Thomas

University of South Carolina Press, United States, 2007.

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This is a thought-provoking study of how ritual unites an African community against social and economic hardships. A case study in the transcendent powers of ritual and faith, *Under the Canopy* illustrates how the healing rites performed at St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission Church, located in Guguletu, an African township in Cape Town, offered a means by which these poor black South Africans liberated themselves from oppressive systems. Thomas argues that the healing rites, and the folk medicine they involved, reoriented the community's focus away from conditions under apartheid and enlisted active community support that aided in expelling the aggressive and toxic apartheid system. Thomas's ethnographic study underscores the remarkable ability of economically disadvantaged people in South Africa to use their few material resources to create powerful and transformative rituals that helped them endure and overcome inhuman circumstances.



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